

Filed for intro on 03/26/2001

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 158
By Phillips

A RESOLUTION To provide for the erection of an appropriate historical marker to commemorate the Old Stone Bridge in Fayetteville.

WHEREAS, It is the policy of this General Assembly to provide for the erection of appropriate markers to commemorate important sites and structures which are of significance to the history of this state; and

WHEREAS, The remains of the Old Stone Bridge that spanned the Elk River near the right-of-way for U.S. Highway 231/431 in Fayetteville is one such significant historic structure; and

WHEREAS, In 1855 a contract for building the bridge was awarded to John Markum and Patrick Flannery for \$30,000; the bridge was to be built of limestone rock quarried up the river and floated down to the construction site near the Great Indian Crossing; and

WHEREAS, The bridge structure featured six elliptical arches spanning a distance of 450 feet, without a keystone and built of dry masonry; only one other bridge of similar type existed in the United States and only six in the world; and

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WHEREAS, Upon completion of three arches, Mr. Flannery informed the county commissioners that the terms of the contract were met and that the approach from the south side was not included; the county court then had to appropriate an additional \$10,000 to secure the completion of the bridge, which opened in 1861; and

WHEREAS, During the War Between the States the bridge was used frequently by both armies; in November of 1863 General William Tecumseh Sherman, Commander of the Union Army of Tennessee, wrote in a dispatch to the Adjutant General in Washington, "I received by a special courier from Gen. Grant at Chattanooga, an order to drop all work east of Bear Creek and march for Stevenson. Instantly I reversed my column, passed the river at Eastport with all the expedition possible, marched eastward till I found Elk River impassible, when I turned in this direction, where the Elk is spanned by a fine stone bridge. I am now in a position to fulfill any orders Gen. Grant may make..."; and

WHEREAS, There is an apocryphal story that General Sherman passed over the bridge on his March to the Sea, and then ordered Major Byrd to blow the bridge up behind him; Major Byrd was said to have refused to do so because of the bridge's architectural uniqueness and great beauty, as well as because the Elk River was fordable at nearby sites during low water; and

WHEREAS, A modern truss bridge was constructed across the Elk River near the Old Stone Bridge in 1928. On February 1, 1969 at 9:15 a.m., during high water, the Old Stone Bridge collapsed and fell into the Elk River, perhaps weakened by age, dynamiting used in construction of the new bridge 41 years earlier, and moisture freezing in the crevices of the bridge; and

WHEREAS, Even after its demise, the Old Stone Bridge holds a place in the hearts of residents of Fayetteville and the surrounding area; the bridge has been a frequent subject of photographers and artists, and places of business and school yearbooks have been named for it; and

WHEREAS, It is most appropriate that the essential facts and historical significance of the construction and existence of the Old Stone Bridge in Fayetteville should be preserved for the edification and appreciation of present and future generations; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the Tennessee Historical Commission is hereby directed to erect appropriate historical markers commemorating the history of the Old Stone Bridge in Fayetteville, on the right-of-way of U.S. Highway 231/431, both northbound and southbound, at the approaches to the Elk River.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That in addition to directional language relative to the geographical location of the Old Stone Bridge, such markers shall contain language incorporating such appropriate elements of the history of the Old Stone Bridge as are contained in this resolution and any other appropriate history as deemed appropriate by the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Lincoln County Historical Society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the erection of such historical markers shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution shall become operative only if the Federal Highway Administrator advises the Commissioner of Transportation in writing that the provisions of this resolution shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Transportation.